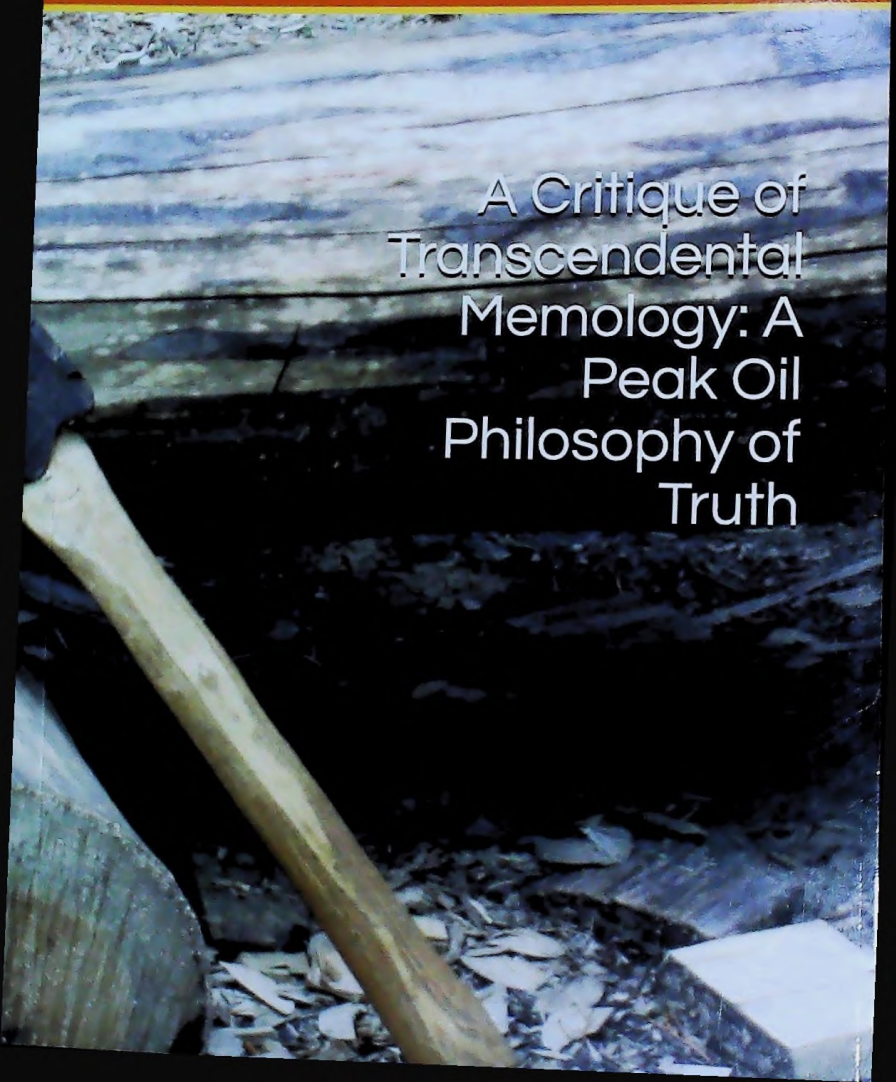
Chad A. Haag



A Critique of Transcendental Memology: A Peak Oil Philosophy of Truth

A Critique of Transcendental Memology:

A Peak Oil Philosophy of Truth

Chad A. Haag

Uchakkada, India

2018

The core of the meme concept are the paired recognitions that ideas spread through a society in much the same way that genes spread through a population, and that natural selection works on both- John Michael Greer, *Apocalypse Not*

[T]hey have not their nature yet, unless they have their form or shape- Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*

But these opinions were somehow [already] in him, were they not?- Plato, *The Meno*

Besides, we all have to die some time, and it may be better to die fighting for survival, or for a cause, than to live a long but empty and purposeless life- Ted Kaczynski, *Industrial Society and Its Future*

In this essay is attempted the venture of laying a foundation for a transcendental critique of the science of Memology. Although memes have established a pervasive, viral, and often unwanted presence in the consciousness of every user of social media, the terminology to describe their origination, spread, and evaluation remains imprecise and unsatisfactory. I argue that this stems from limiting the discussion of memes to the empiricist account of sociological contingencies, such as statistical analyses of social media use, and failing to establish a properly transcendental account of the underlying conditions of Memology. Likewise, this essay will not pursue, for example, a quantitative analysis of meme generation trends on various social media platforms or a sociological analysis of meme sharing trends in various demographic groups. As valuable as such empirical studies may be in their own right, they will still inevitably miss the deeper question of what the conditions for human subjectivity are that allow for the generation and spread of memes in the first place. For this reason, the definition of "meme" in this essay will be significantly broader than the recent social media phenomenon and will explore memes' ability to structure human thought even in the absence of any electronic social media, such as in the case of Agrarian and Hunter Gatherer worldviews. John Michael Greer's analysis of an arbitrarily large number of individual examples of the Apocalypse Meme in his 2011 book *Apocalypse Not: Everything You Know About 2012, Nostradamus, and the Rapture is Wrong* demonstrated that any one of these examples, such as the failed prediction of 2012 or the flop of various arrivals of the Antichrist, was just an embodiment of the same underlying meme which was identifiable on structural grounds alone and, because its structural features predated its surface content, was easily accommodated to outright contradictory religious, political, and social content. Similarly, my emphasis on memes as general shapes that structure human thought below the surface rather than just images with superimposed text shared on smartphone screens will require a distinction, in my own terminology, between shallow memes and deep memes. I

define shallow memes as ideas that spread from one mind to another (the classic definition of meme based on Richard Dawkins' original coining of the term) (*Apocalypse Not* 3). I define deep memes as underlying structural forms to which shallow memes must have a minimal correspondence in order to be understood and accepted by the subject to whom they are spread and that provide the underlying condition for the creative generation of new shallow memes in the first place[1]. This dualism between shallow memes and deep memes is necessary to advance the discussion of memes beyond the inductive question of quantitative analysis to get at the deductive question of transcendental conditions of intelligibility exhibited in human thought in general. In what I term the Meme Process, the process of memological dissemination will succeed if the subject to whom a meme is spread feels the passive impact of an isomorphic fit between the shallow meme to which he or she has been exposed and the deep meme which, at a level unconscious to the subject, provides the underlying conditions that structure that subject's thoughts according to a general shape. The process will fail if the subject encounters a shallow meme that lacks common ground below the surface by embodying a deep meme from a worldview radically unlike that of the subject to whom it has been exposed.

To take three concrete examples of this incompatibility of shallow memes that stems from a lack of a common deep meme, Medieval European ideologies favouring economic stability (what we would call "stagnation" today), aversion to usury (what we could call "rejection of high finance" today), and production of goods through skilled craftspeople with hand tools who had acquired mastery through apprenticeship (what we would call "obsolete technology" today) are either completely incomprehensible or completely *reprehensible* to modern attitudes that condemn economic stagnation in favour of exponential economic growth, that favour usury under the euphemism of "Modern Finance," and that favour

[1] It would be deeply incorrect to suggest that memological creativity and linguistic creativity are simply the same thing, as I argue in depth later in this essay. See John Lyons' *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*.

technological automation of jobs formerly done by skilled tradespeople in the name of "technological innovation." If the Medieval attitudes on these sensitive subjects are understood at all, they are misinterpreted as backward superstition, obsolete knowledge modern science has disproven, or quaint lifestyles of the "noble savage" of the pleasant but unrecoverable past. In any case, there is not simply an incompatibility between shallow memes on the surface but the lack of a common deep meme between a modern worldview that values infinite progress driven by Fossil Fuels and a medieval worldview that values the cycles of agricultural planting and harvesting according to a strict cyclical timetable in order to maintain stability rather than pursue the risky (and arguably impossible) venture of prolonged exponential growth.

The incompatibility of these two worldviews is not merely a matter of having *diverse* contents, such that the two worldviews form two non-overlapping sets of concepts with no common shallow meme. In fact, the incompatibility between the two worldviews is the most apparent precisely when the same shallow meme is interpreted radically differently in each worldview because the underlying deep meme provides an inherent structural twist that distorts any content within its view to fit an underlying geometrical prejudice. For example, although both worldviews have a concept of "perfection," this concept has no intrinsic meaning devoid of structural distortion from some deep meme. Perfection in the Agrarian worldview means completion, a conceptual translation of the geometric form of the complete circle. In Book V of *The Metaphysics*, Aristotle, the Ancient Greek agrarian thinker *par excellence*, defined a circle as a perfect line because, unlike straight lines with no closure, a circle is "whole and complete" (759). Likewise, Thomas Aquinas considered the passage from unrealized potentiality to actuality to be a human limitation inapplicable to God, since God, as already fully actualized, would have no need to become more fully actualized (127). This notion of a God whose perfection lies in his already being complete fits the deep meme

of the circle but would seem outright offensive to the modern fossil fuel-based deep meme of infinite progress, for which the notion of being "already complete" would seem rather disappointing and anti-climactic. In fact, perfection to a modern citizen of the Fossil Fuel Era means infinite progress, whereas completion carries the negative connotation of finitude. Something complete yet finite, like Aristotle's circle, is far less "perfect" to a modern true believer in technological progress than, say, limitless space exploration.

Even the notion of immortality changes radically from the agrarian to the fossil fuel worldview. For example, the Ancient Near Eastern ascetic mystic Isaac of Nineveh, a thinker deeply invested in the immortality of the soul and its fate in the eternal afterlife, tended to think of the achievement of spiritual immortality as a return back to the soul's mystical origin rather than an infinite prolonging of its temporary, fallen state as a bodily being on the earth. He warns, "When the soul leaves its own nature and follows that of the body, it is injured" (17). In fact, "[f]orgetting the world and all that is in it" in order to "banish from [one's] soul all recollections on which are based the images of the material world" is a starting point for accelerating the process of obtaining the perfection of the afterlife, an afterlife which is not so much progress beyond the temporary fallen state of material embodiment but is rather a return back to the mystical origins of the soul, a journey that closes a predetermined circle rather than extends into infinite progression in the same direction (3). On the contrary, Ray Kurzweil, the classic true believer in fossil fuel progress, suffers from the delusion that he can close the gap between the completely unrelated fields of electrical engineering and mysticism by inventing computers which are smart enough to, in turn, invent computers which are smarter enough than their parent computers that they are able to solve previously unsolvable problems, even including death[2]. Yet, for Kurzweil the common phrase "overcoming death through achieving immortality in an eternal afterlife" means something

[2] See Ray Kurzweil's *The Singularity is Near*.

radically different from the agrarian mystical notion of transcending the temporary situation of bodily suffering in this world in order to return to one's mystical origin by becoming a spiritual entity once again. If anything, Kurzweil simply radicalizes the temporary situation of earthly existence which Isaac of Nineveh sought to overcome by making it even more like itself. Kurzweil's heaven, in which human subjects are uploaded into a utopian cyberspace and live forever as virtual subject high on virtual drugs and enjoying perfect, artificial intelligence-generated virtual prostitutes, simply radicalizes the temporary enjoyments that were already there to be "enjoyed" in this life, yet taking them one step further by making them last forever. Of course, "continuing to move in the same direction" is the literal meaning of the word "progress", so it is only fitting that the term "eternal life" for a believer in progress is just an infinite progression in the same direction one was already moving for thousands of years without the help of a utopian cyberspace.

Likewise, there is no such thing as a "neutral concept" undistorted by the influence of a deep meme that lends its own geometrical twist to how one interprets even the same shallow memes on the surface. Yet it would be a mistake to argue that the difference between the deep meme of the agrarian circle and the deep meme of the modern infinite ascending ray of progress are simply two different idealistic modes of thought that are not in some sense shaped by the material world in which the subject dwells. Instead, a deep meme is itself structured by the hard limits of the world in which the subject dwells and transitively passes that structuring effect onto the subject at a second remove. In this sense, shallow memes are *doubly structured* by both the deep meme and its underlying physical limiting factor. By an underlying physical limiting factor, I mean that crucial energy resource which enables a subject's worldview to exist by literally enabling the subject to exist as a physical being subject to the material limitations of earthly survival. Although survival is never determined by only a single resource (one needs, for example, food *and* water *and* clean air for breathing

etc.), there is still a tendency for one crucial element to be transformed into the symbol of all the other physical necessities, thereby symbolizing the limit to human survival itself. This symbol of the underlying physical limiting factor shifts from big game for the hunter gatherer, to cyclically harvested grain for the agrarian peasant, to explosively potent fossil fuels for the modern citizen of progress, and, arguably, a different shape altogether in the age of Salvage [3] that will inevitably follow from the consequences of surpassing the limit of economically viable fossil fuel extraction for the planet. At a Phenomenological level, the deep meme is simply a geometrical metaphor for the obscured consciousness of the underlying physical hard limit (its intentional object, to use Husserl's terminology, is oil, big game, grain, or salvage materials[4]). The disappearance of the object of consciousness (for example, the depletion of fossil fuels resulting in a Post Peak Oil world) would result in the loss of the epistemological structure of the deep meme and all of the "truths" it allowed to exist. Truth is never simply an idealistic given that transcends its Phenomenological context in a timeless vacuum; truth is, rather, fatally dependent upon the presence of underlying hard physical limits. The loss of oil will literally transform truth into falsehood right before our astonished eyes.

Contrary to expectation, the underlying physical hard limit is *not* the Marxist motif of the material base of the "real modes of production" which is disfigured into an ideological half-truth in a society's superstructure. The limitation of the Marxist motif of a mode of production is that it places far too great an emphasis on economic production as something

---

[3] See John Michael Greer's notion that an era of salvage will follow the era of fossil fuel extraction "The Strategy of Salvage" in first volume of *The Archdruid Report, The Coming of Peak Oil*

[4] Husserl's notion of intentional givenness holds that experience is always experience *of* something. This relocates the object of experience from the position of inaccessible exteriority it held in Kant's theory of the Thing in Itself and restores it back to its place as a given of consciousness that was always already "there." That object is not merely constructed by the subject's phenomenal faculties but is rather given to consciousness as an unproblematic starting point that is only problematized retroactively through the obfuscation of the Natural Attitude (see, for example, Husserl's *Ideas* p. 119). In the case of energy sources that form the basis of a worldview, such as big game for hunter gatherers or petroleum for the modern fossil fuel era citizen, the energy source is in a certain sense, always already present to consciousness as an object but is obscured by the attitude that fails to allow what is given unproblematically to consciousness to be revealed as such

actively pursued. For example, the change from an archaic mode of producing tables with hand tools in a small craftsman's shop to producing tables in a modern factory with technologically sophisticated equipment and teams of exploited employees is largely a shift in how one chooses to perform an activity. Marx's logic is, therefore, that the shift from capitalism to communism can be carried out through a similar shift in *how* one performs the activity of production by changing the real mode of production to a non-capitalist mode that still harnesses capitalism's productive potential but distributes its benefit more evenly within the social body through abandoning the literally exploitative pursuit of surplus value (paying workers less than their labour is worth in order to sell their products back to them for more than they are worth)[5] What Marx neglects to mention is that the industrial mode of production, no matter how one *chooses* to pursue it, is simply impossible in the absence of crucial non-renewable resources such as coal, oil, and natural gas, resources that are already starting to fall into irreversible decline. The emphasis on an activity one actively pursues in a certain way simply breaks down when carried over from mode of production to its underlying resource base. The presence or absence of a crucial resource is not an activity a human subject can tinker to fit a desired outcome, such as the shift to Communism. The givenness of a crucial resources places the subject in a radically *passive* position in which the subject cannot make more oil exist on will, for example. One does not make oil exist as an activity, one merely discovers that it exists through passive reception of the contingent state of the world one happens to live in. This is why the resources of Phenomenological givenness in experience are much more relevant to the science of Memology than the Marxist theory of Dialectical Materialism is. Dialectical Materialism largely considers any hard physical limit to be an ideological illusion which the forward march of dialectical movement will negate away in order to reform it into a "higher" notion[6]. Phenomenology, on the contrary, allows

[5] See *Capital* Vol. 1 by Karl Marx

[6] What is too often forgotten about Hegel is that his system is not so much built on the triad of three concepts (thesis, antithesis, synthesis, terms which, of course, appear nowhere within Hegel's body of work) but is rather

the radical passivity to recognize material limits which cannot be negated away by the movement of dialectical progress. Phenomenological passivity is, ironically enough, the fitter account of material conditions' influence on consciousness.

Because deep memes are not just idealistic thought forms that float untethered to the hard physical limits of the subject's world but are rather capable of structuring shallow memes only by transitively passing on the structuring they themselves received from the underlying physical limiting factor of their worldview, it would be incorrect to speak of the passage from the agrarian circle to the fossil fuel era infinite ray of progress as simply an epistemological passage from false knowledge to true knowledge. Such a simplistic account of "progress" from falsity to truth would miss the entire point of truth's dependence upon the structuring influence of a deep meme that is the unspoken condition of truth in the first place. In the absence of our own underlying physical limiting factor (fossil fuels), all of the truths we take for granted regarding exponential economic growth, modern financial manipulation, and technological automation would lose the deeper foundation to be true in the same way that the truths of the hunter gatherer dissolve into "superstition" when torn from the unique conditions of living within the limits that big game hunting and wild berry foraging provide. A simple dualistic account of truth and falsity is clearly inadequate to describe a much more complicated situation.

Although it is fashionable to think of hunter gatherer and agrarian worldviews as simply incomplete versions of the modern fossil fuel worldview that were "completed" with the advance of modern science and technology, the deep meme of the hunter gatherer holds a radically different shape than both the agrarian circle and the infinite ascending ray of

---

about the immanent failure for the Notion to be itself. The Hegelian twist on negativity is, of course, that only be failing to be itself does negativity ironically become the very occasion for a development of the Notion into a higher Notion. For example, it is only because the primitive opening Notion of Sense Certainty fails that one can find the more sophisticated social forms of Notion in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, from Self Consciousness to Reason to Spirit to Religion. See Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

progress whose truths simply cannot be evaluated outside the underlying context of a unique deep meme with its own geometric shape. The deep meme unique to the hunter gatherer worldview is the general shape of the level plane of reciprocity in which the distinction between nature and culture is levelled out[7]. Nature is anthropomorphized by personifying natural forces and wild animals into mystical conscious beings who can be appeased through pseudo-social communicative rituals. Likewise, culture is naturalized and the contingencies of one's own cultural background are reified into a set of unquestionable givens with the status ordinarily reserved for physical nature. The ultimate goal of this levelling out in which nature is anthropomorphized and culture is naturalized is to establish an equilibrium between the two spheres in which reciprocal benefit ensures that the wild food sources upon which the hunter gatherer depends for survival are not threatened to extinction, ensuring the hunter gatherer's culture will in turn be preserved in this act of mutual preservation.

On a Phenomenological level, the hunter gatherer deep meme of levelled reciprocity is simply a geometrical metaphor for the hard reality of living in a state of dependence upon wild food sources. Similarly, the agrarian deep meme of the circle is a geometrical metaphor for living in a state of dependence on agricultural grain sources that follow a strict routine of sowing, tending, harvesting, and storage that will be faithfully repeated the following year. In our era, the deep meme of the infinitely ascending ray is a geometric metaphor for the temporary situation of having access to highly concentrated, extraordinarily useful, but fatally limited stores of fossil fuels which enabled a historical period of progress that was misshaped into the geometrical metaphor of a straight line that never retracts. This era, the demise of which is an unavoidable conclusion of the global peak in petroleum production in 2005, will be followed by an era of salvage in which abundant materials manufactured during the age of fossil fuels will transform into a new resource base to be repurposed to the suit the needs of

[7] See Habermas's "Some Characteristics of the Mythical and Modern Ways of Understanding the World" in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1

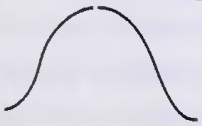
an historical era radically unlike our own". The shift in energy sources will result in a shift at the deep meme level from the geometric metaphor of the infinitely ascending ray to the deep meme of the bell curve. The bell curve is fitting as deep meme to the era after fossil fuels because, not coincidentally, it is the geometrical model that properly maps the mathematical rate of progress, plateau, and decline that fossil fuel extraction for the globe is currently undergoing. But in addition to its mathematical correctness, it is also the deep meme of memory, a reminder that the abundance of the past was not an inevitable trend that will continue infinitely into the future but was instead a temporary trend that will not repeat, although its effects linger through the literal presence of huge ruins from which useful goods might still be harvested. The bell curve is therefore the deep meme of memory in an era certain to dwell on the past as the key to understanding the future.

The following table therefore summarizes these four deep memes and their implications:

[Table 1]

Worldview	Deep Meme	Energy Sources	Transcendental Shape	Concept
Hunter Gatherer	Level Plane	Woolly Mammoth,		Reciprocity

" See Richard Heinberg's *Afterburn: Society Beyond Fossil Fuels* for a more thorough explanation of Peak Oil. Peak Oil is the theory that hard geological limits provide constraints on the rate of oil extraction which, with the proper mathematical modelling, can be extrapolated to predict the rate of discovery, extraction, and decline for a single oil well, a single oilfield, a single oil producing region, a single oil producing nation, and even the world itself. Hubbert predicted that the world would hit Peak Oil, the plateau at which the world never again increases true rates of discovery or extraction and enters into permanent decline. The world did, in fact, hit Peak Oil in 2005.

		Deer, Wild Roots, Berries		
Agrarian	Circle	Grain, Cattle, Sheep		Completion
Fossil Fuel	Infinite Ray	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Coal		Progress
Salvage	Bell Curve	Salvage Materials from Industrial Past		Memory

The revelation that the deep meme is a general shape of consciousness, influenced by the hard limit of the ultimate energy source of an era, radically reverses the way we usually think about memes and the networks that transmit them. Although we usually think of memes as being data shared by machines over electronic networks, in a strange reversal, machines are not the foundation of memes but are rather themselves examples of shallow memes whose origin of comprehension lies much further below the surface. A machine is comprehensible only as a redundancy of the transcendental form of intelligibility unique to the era of Fossil Fuels. The logic of the machine is by no means an eternally valid objective truth that would be comprehensible outside the fossil fuel context in which it was developed. In fact, a machine, which consumes many times its weight in fossil fuel resources just to be produced and then burns an unspeakable amount of fuel over its lifetime to accomplish tasks formerly done by humans with hand tools for a fraction of the energy cost, is only intelligible as

"fitting" the deep meme that promises an infinite return on investment is possible from a finite input (in this case, the fatally finite reserves of fossil fuels.) A machine is, therefore, inherently memological and can only be interpreted as a shallow redundancy of the deep meme of fossil fuel era linear progress. A machine would quickly transform from the symbol of progress as such into a useless, ugly heap of metal and plastic when torn from the deep meme of oil and retrofitted with the deep meme of, say, agrarian grain. The worldview structured by cyclical grain harvests simply has no memological resources to make sense of the logic of the machine. The era of salvage, in which a reliably functioning electric grid with abundant natural gas to power the worldwide web on a constant 24/7 basis has all but vanished, will similarly devalue the "same machine" from the symbol of progress as such into a heap of metal and plastic from which, at best, some material might be harvested to be repurposed to fill much more modest needs unimaginable to the engineers who originally designed it. The flawed assumption that a machine could only ever be one thing (in our case, a gateway to the worldwide web rather than a useless heap of metal) is a fatal error that enacts a type of "reification" far more grave than anything Marx had envisioned in his critique of capitalism.

Of course, the question of what a thing "is" inevitably begs the question of language but I argue that Memology is not simply a subset of linguistics. Although it would be all too easy to try to understand Memology as just another species of linguistic generation, transmission, and evaluation of data, there is something inherently pre-linguistic about Memology. A transcendental critique of the interplay between deep memes and shallow memes is a unique science that cannot be reductively incorporated into the systematic expositions of Linguistics, Mathematics, or Logic. In other words, the explanation for how linguistic contents are generated, spread, and evaluated *is not* an adequate account for the explanation of how memes proceed through the same stages. Memes do not simply hijack the

subjective faculty of language and utilize its equipment temporarily to convey what is still inherently a linguistic message. For example, the ability for social media memes using the same template to embody outright *contradictory* linguistic content from rival political parties while being equally effective in both cases proves that something irreducible to mere linguistic information is at work at the level of deep memes which provide the underlying condition in *both* cases. The pervasive recycling of the same meme template images to advance both conservative and liberal linguistic messages naturally begs the question which of the two incompatible political parties "got it right." If a meme template already "contains" a linguistic message that the text superimposed over it merely reduplicates at a more explicit level, then only one political ideology could effectively deploy the machinery of memes to spread its messages. Yet the effectiveness of memes has proven irreducible to the uses of a single political party or ideology. The very question of whether a linguistic message superimposed over a meme is enough to exhaust the deeper meaning of the meme is dependent upon a treatment of Memology as just a subset of Linguistics but I will argue in greater depth a bit later on in this essay that it is, instead, something of a presupposition of language itself.

Of course, memes' relation to language is self reflexively problematized by the fact that "meme" itself is not a natural word from Modern English that would, as the later Heidegger have it, let language speak[9]. Instead, as a transliteration from the Ancient Greek verb μιμεῖσθαι, "to imitate", memes' etymological relation to mimesis somehow still loses something of its meaning when merely translated back into the vernacular term "imitation." Richard Dawkins' original coining of the term as a transliteration from "mimesis" implies that memes are active forms of imitation. That is, a subject "infected" with a viral meme will then be induced, perhaps involuntarily, into actively imitating the content of the meme to

[9] See Heidegger's later work, *On The Way To Language*

which he or she was exposed, thereby infecting others in the process. In this case, Memology would seem to be simply the sociological analysis of how infected hosts imitate ideas to which they are exposed. Perhaps if shallow memes were the only layer considered, this flat and reductive approach might appear satisfactory. However, the dualistic nature of deep and shallow memes forces one to consider Memology not as an active imitation of a viral content, but rather as the passive "fit" between a deep meme already present under the surface and a shallow meme that is accepted (and, in fact, generated in the first place) only on condition of that isomorphic fit.

It is arguable that even before Richard Dawkins transliterated the term from Ancient Greek, the concept of Memology was already deducible in Plato's treatment of mimesis (quite literally, the Philosophical analysis of "meming"). It would be thoroughly misleading, for example, to think of the mimesis between an earthly object of experience and its Platonic Form as one of active imitation[10]. A beautiful tree does not, for example, actively "imitate" the abstract form of beauty because that tree was exposed to that form at some point and was then virally infected by the shallow meme of this content. Rather, a beautiful tree can be interpreted as such only because the deeper layer of a form (or rather, perhaps, a meme) of beauty was already present below the surface to the consciousness of the subject who evaluates it as such. It is a matter of isomorphic fitting between a surface content and a deep content rather than a conscious decision to act out an imitation in order to close the gap between oneself and the ideal to which one strives. In fact, Memology is far more passive than the term "imitation" would allow one to grasp.

Although it has become commonplace to present, for example, the Badiouan "sanitized" version of Plato as a modern rationalist primarily interested in the autonomy and timelessness of abstract mathematical truths (such as the autonomously existing truths of

[10] See Plato's *The Republic*, *The Ion*, and *The Meno*

Zermelo-Fraenkel Axiomatic Set Theory), there is no doubt that Plato's interest in the Forms extended far beyond the abstract content of mathematical and logical ideality[11]. Plato's notion that the comprehension of *social* content, such as the beauty of a beautiful woman or the justice of a just ruler, stems from a passive recognition of correspondence to an already familiar form has embarrassed modern appeals to rationality but is an essential component of his Philosophy, the amputation of which from his body of thought would grotesquely disfigure the integrity of one of the greatest of all philosophers. I argue, though, that the problem of mimesis as passive fitting rather than active imitation is largely solved by the resources of Memology in which a deep meme can account for the comprehension of social, non-mathematical content without resorting to Mythological accounts of the World of Forms. Rather, understanding memologically is simply a viable alternative to the accounts of the Linguistic Turn, as I explain in greater detail for the remainder of this essay.

Therefore, Memology is *not* a matter of actively choosing to spread a message one has found appealing. It is far more a passive matter of Phenomenological givenness and Existential thrownness to dwell under the influence of deep memes which one *did not* choose[12]. Regarding thrownness, Heidegger's understanding of the radical historicity of Dasein precluded any anonymous set of eternally valid coordinates of Truth to transcend the contingency of a specific disclosure of that horizon of meaning within history. Rather, as radical disclosure itself, Dasein forces one to consider the disclosure of transcendental horizons of meaning within the finitude of historicity, such that disclosure of meaning is a matter of interpretation within a Hermeneutic Circle rather than a transparent set of eternally valid objectivities[13]. One does not so much encounter "things" with a single objective truth as one encounters "events" that occur within the logic of hermeneutical meaningfulness. Yet, of

[11] See Alain Badiou's *Being and Event*
[12] See Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*
[13] See Slavoj Žižek's *Absolute Recoil*, p. 117

course, the very presupposition of interpretation is foreknowledge, since it would be impossible to take the first step of trying to understand a single part of a narrative without having some general idea of the whole. One can only investigate an object of experience "further" if one somehow already knows what it is. The paradox of foreknowledge is, of course, already solved by Plato by appealing to Memological form. Mimesis simply is this passive foreknowledge by which one "already knows" what something is that one sets out to interpret, because the form was intelligible even before the first word in a sentence was summoned to describe it.

The Ancient Greek tendency to prioritize passive fit to a form which is intelligible on a pre-linguistic level is one of the primary challenges to understanding Plato and Aristotle in modern times, a difficulty made even worse by the trend of the Linguistic Turn. Following the Linguistic Turn, in which there really is nothing "beyond" language, one felt constrained to have to redefine the Ancient Greek problem of essence strictly in linguistic terms. In this sense, one could only provide a definition for what something is through the process of building up correct sentences about it that would capture the definition with the right words. But of course, building a definition up with language is an inherently inductive approach (since, of course, one can only use the words that one has already acquired from consulting a linguistic system) that a priori rules out a deductive, passive fit between the object and its Platonic Form or, still worse, relegates such an approach to the embarrassingly archaic Mythical Realm of Platonic Ideas. Yet even in Aristotle, the problem of needing to inductively build up definitions with language is solved by the mysterious, properly Phenomenological, way that understanding the essence of something is not a matter of constructing a correct sentence about it with language but is rather a matter of simply "taking the form" of it in intuition, as Aristotle already knew in the example of the ring and wax in *De Anima* II.12 (580). Aristotle's famous example of a ring that can leave its form as an

imprint in a piece of wax without leaving its material (for example, gold) demonstrates that for Aristotle, the key to understanding the essence of a thing is not simply a matter of having "the right words" to describe it. In fact, as Aristotle notes in Book VII of *The Metaphysics*, one has properly grasped the essence of, for example, a circle only if one realizes that its formal essence is the same regardless of whether it is materially embodied in bronze, stone, or wood (800). The form of the object is somehow enough to define what it is, even in the absence of words and even without any material cause as such. There is no question which one Aristotle would prefer if he were given the option to choose either an intimate acquaintance with the form of the thing (abstracted from its matter) or a correctly formulated sentence about what something is that substitutes "the right words" for an intuitive encounter with the thing's form. Although the Linguistic Turn would largely relegate the former to a senseless lump of data that can only obtain a meaning when retroactively fit into a broader system of linguistic meanings, such an approach largely undervalues the meaning inherent in "taking the form" of a thing by redefining all meaning as having to be constructed with words.

Ironically enough, the insistence of the Linguistic Turn to pin down the material cause of meaning as having to be "made of words" misses the entire point of Aristotle's revelation that understanding requires suspending the obsession with material makeup in order to focus on a form that is otherwise given unproblematically to intuition (a conclusion quite similar to Husserl's insistence[4] that categorial intuition provides direct intuitive insight into categorial relations before considered only as "built up" in well-formed strings within the syntax of language or logic). In other words, Aristotle's chief and often overlooked contribution to Philosophy was the revelation that trying to answer "what something is" by focusing on "what it's made of" will miss the fact that seeking the answer in the material cause is a

[4] See Husserl's Fifth Logical Investigation in *Logical Investigations*, Vol. 2

methodological error that stems from not realizing that the essence in to be found in the form, not in some ultimate matter that underlies all of the accidental properties of the thing (as much as the colloquial meaning of "substance" tends to misrepresent substance as an ultimate matter underlying all the properties that "float" above it rather than as the ultimate form stripped of accidental, non-essential features). Consider Aristotle's claim in *The Physics* II 1 that the "form indeed is 'nature' rather than the matter: for a thing is more properly said to be what it is when it has attained fulfilment than when it exists potentially" (238). In addition, Aristotle's claim in the Lexicon of *The Metaphysics* that physical entities "have not their nature yet, unless they have their form or shape" shows that understanding what something is is inherently dependent upon the form of that thing, such that Ancient Greek concept of *Physis* ("φύσις") cannot be understood apart from the teleological orientation for a thing to achieve its proper form that would embody its essence "out in the open" through exterior definition, an essence it would still intrinsically *be* itself even in the absence of any linguistic system that could capture it with words.

Likewise, the endless investigation into the material makeup of a thing will never resolve the dilemma of essence since the definition of that thing is only truly accessible when a proper form has been achieved since its essence is not a sentence *about* its form; its essence simply *is* that form. The modern scientific obsession with reducing social phenomena like love to their material makeup in the biochemistry of the brain, although not irrelevant, has simply radicalized the "material cause fallacy," as I coin it, to a previously unimaginable extreme. Memology offers a recourse from this madness that restores, I hope, the wisdom of Aristotle and Plato to a modern context. At any rate, the Ancient Greek notion of mimesis provides a radical alternative to the standard notion of memes as mere imitations of viral social content. In fact, I consider careful attention to Ancient Greek investigations of Plato and Aristotle to be far more beneficial to the study of memes than a simply orthodoxy to the

intentions of Richard Dawkins as the so called "founder" of the meme (a title about which, needless to say, I have grave reservations). Memology suspends the question of material cause of meaning (as having to consist of words etc.) altogether in order to present deep memes as forms that are already meaningful in themselves *even without the aid of language*.

Clearly, to understand a form is not the same thing as to understand a sentence. Memological comprehension is not a privative or negative form of linguistic comprehension but is rather, shockingly, its underlying condition. Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, of course, famously opens with the claim that written words are symbols of spoken words, spoken words are symbols of mental experiences, and mental experiences are images of things (40). Although it would be all too easy to dismiss this outright as a naïve, pre-Linguistic Turn belief in an absolute ground beyond the disruptive dissemination of the signifier for which, as Derrida claimed, a centre with "full presence" is a priori ruled out, I argue that Derrida's critique of language is largely irrelevant to Aristotle's concerns[15]. The very need to ground language in a centre of full presence immune to the minimal difference of writing is, ironically enough, an argument that places far too great an emphasis on language. Language occupies a much more modest position within Aristotle's overall system because comprehension has no intrinsic need to be grounded in valid linguistic syntax or proper lexical diction. Instead, comprehension is primarily an intuitive grasp of a form, and only secondarily linguistic. In a certain sense, in order to "have the right words" for something,

[15] Although Jacques Derrida is better known for his argument against Logocentrism in his lengthy critique of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*, his thought is somewhat clearer in his much less cited critiques of Husserl in, for example, "Genesis and Structure and Phenomenology." Derrida's critique of the attempt to ground language in a centre of full presence largely stems from the inability for consciousness itself to obtain closure. Consciousness itself, far from being a substantial centre of language, is itself cut by an irreducible opening that negates its claim to be a type of "full presence." For example, Phenomenological absolute certainty, grounded in the eidetic investigation of regional essences, can only be achieved, ironically enough, through the non-regional opening of the noema which, precisely because it is an opening with no proper region, is the sole basis for the establishment of regional certainties that require the anonymous placeholder of the noema for their temporary manifestation to intuition. As valid as this argument might be on its own grounds, it is simply irrelevant to Aristotle's theory of language because for Aristotle, language occupies a much more modest position within his system. Aristotle's system does not depend upon establishing a centre of full presence in language because language is merely secondary to the Memological comprehension of essences anyway, a comprehension which is all the purer if it is freed from the constraints of material cause.

you must at some deeper level already be acquainted with its essence at the level of form. That is why Aristotle notes that words are symbols, not of the things themselves, but of the experiences of those things which are "images" of their form rather than correct linguistic descriptions of their properties which could only be faithful if they exhaustively enumerated all of them. The laborious task of listing out a thing's properties with language is quite secondary to the graceful and instantaneous grasp of its essence through taking its form in intuition.

Of course, one of Kant's chief discoveries was that the radical heterogeneity between word and image is so vast that something of a miracle is required to join them into the graceful unity of experience we take for granted. In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant noted that the solution would have to be transcendental because empirical sense contents and rational concepts are simply too different from one another to be joined without the intermediation of some other, much more mysterious, faculty, which he identified as the Imagination. Although a full treatment of Kant's lengthy, highly technical treatment of this problem is beyond the scope of this present essay[16], Kant's relevance to the problem of Memology is his discovery that concepts cannot be applied directly to empirical sense contents. Instead, sense contents must pass through the filter of transcendental schematization in the Imagination in order to furnish the Understanding with proto-concepts and it is the proto-concepts, *not* the raw sense contents, which are subsumed under a concept in order to provide the graceful flow of experience as inherently meaningful (104). Although Kant is often thought of as prioritizing the discursive nature of experience as linguistically mediated by concepts, it would be a mistake to downplay the crucial role that imaginative schematization plays. The Imagination does not just schematize sense contents according to a neutral, anonymous standard that only later obtains meaning *after* the Understanding

[16] See Immanuel Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* p. 104 for an introduction to the Imagination's interplay with the Understanding.

magically endows it with an intelligible concept (the Myth of the Linguistic Turn). Instead, the symmetrical fit with the concept is possible only if the Imagination has already schematized intuition to pre-correspond to some form that is inherently meaningful *as a form* and for which the concept merely provides an isomorphic fit that supplements a "shape meaning" with a "word meaning" (in a manner shockingly similar to Aristotle.) In a certain sense, the shape of the content must already be meaningful if it is to be matched at all to a concept that supplements its meaning with a corresponding linguistic content.

In a certain sense, the errors of the Linguistic Turn are already present as early as Hegel's appropriation of Kant's philosophy and, as an intellectual giant towering high above the professional posturers who occupied prestigious academic appointments by parroting half-truths from the Linguistic Turn from the 20th Century all the way to our present day, Hegel is far worthier of our attention to consider the inadequacy of a turn away from Aristotle to Language alone. The transition from Kant to Hegel was largely built on the revelation that although Kant distinguished the transcendentally schematized form of the proto-concept from the concept under which it was subsumed, Hegel appeared to have discovered that, on the contrary, there is no transcendental form as such outside the Notion. Hegel could not allow for a transcendental form as a given before or beyond the Notion because his own rejection of truth as correspondence drove the criteria of truth back into the imminence of the embodiment of the notion itself. For Hegel, dialectic is not the interplay of the three concepts "thesis, antithesis, and synthesis" (terms which are remarkably absent from Hegel's body of work) that always somehow incorporate "the best of both worlds" into a final synthesis, as the caricature of Hegel peddled by way of absurdly overpriced tuition in "top universities" in the United States of America might hold. Imminent Critique is simply the realization that truth cannot be a correspondence between the linguistic notion and the world if the notion itself has failed to live up to its own truth by failing somehow to be itself. For example, the

very movement of *Phenomenology of Spirit* is sufficiently generated from the failure of each phase to be itself on notional grounds alone. Sense Certainty gives way to Perception only because it has failed to live up to really be Sense Certainty, just as Perception gives way to Understanding only because it has failed to live up to really be Perception. The transition from Sense Certainty to higher and higher social and political notions reveals, of course, that the Notion itself largely vanishes as such in the process of a movement that precludes any reification or fetishism of the Notion to be an illusion of form dissolved by the radical negativity of dialectic.

Hegel differed from Kant, therefore, largely in noticing that notions never simply "fit" the form of the proto-concept in one clean act of subsumption; the concept is not a linguistic tool that unproblematically allows the intellect to understand the world one piece at a time by providing a linguistic equivalent of the form or shape of that piece of the world. Rather, the notion fails precisely because there is no clean form or shape that fully satisfies the condition of coincidence with itself, which is why the failure of the embodiment of the notion is not merely an epistemological limitation but is rather an insight into the ontological principle of reality's fundamental incompleteness, as Žižek is so fond of repeating in his many analyses of Hegel[17]. Therefore, the incomplete notion is not exterior to a complete form given in the world, the incompleteness of notion is, in itself, simply the impossibility of a clean form that escapes the negativity of notional failure. Formal incompleteness and notional failure simply cannot be thought apart from one another in Hegel.

Because Hegel largely considered the "picture thinking" which fixated on form to be an illusory stage in the movement of dialectic which would be devastated by the inevitable movement of negation, Marx shifted his focus to the material cause of social inequality by devaluing notional analysis to ideological half-truth and investigations of form to fetishistic

[17] See, in particular, the chapter "The Wound" in *Absolute Recoil*.

reification, as the real material cause lay somewhere deep in the society's economic substructure. The irony that Hegel's radicalization of Notional Critique led to a devaluation of language itself to ideology in favour of material cause alone is not as great a surprise as it might initially seem. On the contrary, this misunderstanding of the limits of language would only naturally lead to a collapse in the status of language and its devaluation to a merely superstructural, epiphemonal role floating somewhere above the full truths of the material base.

Hegel's claim that formal inadequacy must intrinsically be notional inadequacy failed because he understood the problem all *too well*. Hegel's chief shortcoming is that he gives language far too generous a role within his overall system. In fact, one can account for formal inadequacy without the need for language to play any role at all. It is true that Memological form is formally inadequate, but that is precisely because it is just a transcendental metaphor for a radically contingent horizon of Phenomenological givenness, not an eternally valid grid that provides the a priori coordinates of truth that merely enable linguistic notions to illuminate with the light of *λόγος* what was already formally true below the surface. The failure of Form can be meaningful even in the absence of a linguistic "message" that provides the notional equivalent to map out what is structurally already intelligible to the subject whose frame of consciousness simply *is* that form. In fact, the failure of the deep meme to meaningfully structure the world of consciousness is the most telling precisely when it is *not* captured linguistically in a message but rather when the default of the underlying physical hard limit results in the impossibility of that notion itself. The disappearance of Oil, for example, will certainly result in a type of failure of the Notions of the Fossil Fuel era, but it would be a grave error to think that the absence of fossil fuels will be inherently notional, such that every subject of the world who underwent this shift would have to provide the same words in language in order to express the "message" of this failure, a message that

transcendentally contains the "right words" that each subject only experiences truly if he or she constructs the sentence equally correctly. On the contrary, the loss of Fossil Fuels will devalue such a message to, at best, a secondary reaction to a shift that affects a structural level far more fundamental than language and does so far more passively than any appeal to a linguistic construction would capture. The disappearance of Oil will not be the kind of notional failure Hegel envisioned that ironically provides, by way of its very negation, the forward movement of dialectic. The disappearance of Oil will be more a matter of notional disappearance, radical absence, and terrifying loss of meanings rather than the elaborate systematic movement to finer grades of Notional sophistication.

It is for this reason that I consider the deep meme to be something of a transcendental presupposition of language itself rather than just a single content borrowed from language, something only intelligible when restored to its original linguistic context. Rather, systems in general are not the basis from which memes are torn, but are redundant of memes in that deep memes have a tendency to serve an epistemological basis for sprawling systems which are, no matter how quantitatively large, always merely redundant expressions of a non-linguistic structural meaning already present in the general shape of the deep meme that serves as a common taproot for the whole series of systems to which it gives birth. It may be customary to view the pseudoscience of Modern Economics as a "rigorous science" that merely provides the mathematical models to faithfully represent the immutable "Laws of the Market," based upon years of "unbiased" empirical data documenting the Market's behaviour. However, no matter how numerically sophisticated this modelling might become or how quantitatively large the empirical data set might be, Modern Economics has proven itself to be completely incapable of making accurate predictions about the future, as Dmitry Orlov, John Michael Greer, and Richard Heinberg have explored in great depth[18]. The litany of failed predictions

[18] See *The Five Stages of Collapse: Survivors' Toolkit* by Dmitry Orlov, *The Wealth of Nature: Economics as if Survival Mattered* by John Michael Greer, and *The End of Growth* by Richard Heinberg.

and the fortunes lost on the bad advice of highly paid "experts" in the field do not stem simply from a lack of data or from inaccurate mathematical modelling but rather from the fact that the system of data and equations, no matter how vast or how linearly complicated, is actually just a redundancy of something far simpler, something not even properly systematic. This system is a redundancy of the deep meme of progress for which the geometrical metaphor of an infinitely ascending straight line exerts its distorting influence into the internal logic of the system by forcing it to predict infinite returns on finite investments by promising exponential growth on a planet that has already surpassed the peak of viable extraction rates for the vital fuels and other resources and which has already issued an amount of debt with interest that is far *greater* than the total amount of wealth, printed or real, in the world. This blindness to so basic an empirical fact and so blatant a logical absurdity is not as great a surprise as it may appear to one trapped in the illusion of "unbiased empiricism." It is simply to be expected in a system that does not investigate reality objectively so much as reiterate a geometrical metaphor into a twisted feedback loop for which expectation takes precedence over observation. For all its numerically sophisticated mathematical modelling, the basic assumption that "infinity" is a reasonable result to expect from a process with finite inputs betrays the unreasonableness at the very root of the entire sprawling set of limbs.

I argue that systems are just redundancies of deep memes that reduplicate the geometrical metaphor of, for example, infinite ascendancy into a set of procedures that act upon a domain of data values in order to yield a set of results that are predetermined by the distorting influence of the meme's shape rather than arrived at "objectively" through an unbiased internal logic. The shift from a deep meme to a system is simply the shift from meaning as a shape to meaning as a syntactically valid result whose genealogical history can be traced back through a line of well-defined procedures which, given any generic data value,

can yield a predictably similar result. The shift from meaning as a shape to meaning as a syntactically valid result is not as great a leap as it might seem. A geometrical metaphor has no need for syntactic rules of formation: there's no need to construct a well-formed string that conveys with a set of words what is already apparent at the level of form. Similarly, a geometric shape has no need to work on an input in order to yield an output later on in time. Its *meaning* lacks the temporality of a process, as it is given in intuition in a simultaneity that leaves no ultimate result to be desired outside the picture. Yet I do not mean to imply that the two *should* be thought of in contrast. a system is simply a shallow intention of a deep meme whose underlying presence is the main condition of validity for the system. Modern Economics, for example, certainly does not gain its validity as a system from the correctness of its predictions (at which it has failed so miserably.) Its sole condition of acceptance as a respectable field of study is that it overlaps with the underlying deep meme of progress by systematizing the general tendency to infinite ascendency into a set of equations that promise to literally yield infinite returns from finite inputs. Similarly, without the isomorphic "click" between deep meme and shallow meme, even a system of thought that could predict results more reliably and had expectations that corresponded more reasonably to the hard facts of reality on a finite planet would not be taken seriously as a viable alternative to the sacred science of Economics. It is arguable that Hunter Gatherer and Agrarian expectations about economic yields on a finite planet have a far greater track record of empirical verification and an inherently more reasonable internal logic (consider, for example, the Ancient Egyptian agricultural system's ability to sustain a civilization for thousands of years, which is not a small accomplishment at all.) Yet the disappearance of the deep memes of the circle and the level plane have devalued these older systems of economic planning to the status of pre-scientific superstition. A system is never simply an unbiased map of reality's laws; it is not so

much a map of where you have been as it is an architectural blueprint for where you would like to be, however implausible.

The relation between memes and linguistic systems is deeply complicated, however, by the fact that the processes of creative generation, dissemination, and evaluation seem to apply equally to both memes and language. In fact, one might be led to think that memes are just a tiny subset of language and that to creatively generate a new shallow meme is simply an exercise of one's linguistic ability for creativity. This interplay between passive evaluation and creative generation of memes is admittedly similar to the linguistic notion of creativity, whereby a competent speaker of a language has the innate ability to creatively generate a theoretically infinite number of new sentences but only within the constraints of the rules of a system which can be rigorously pinned down to a structural affinity among every member of even an infinitely large series. For example, the set of numbers generated by the rule $\{x, 2^x\}$ may be infinitely large but not random, as the structural rule for raising 2 to the power of x provides an adequate description for each member, no matter how large[19]. However, it would be deeply incorrect to suggest that memological creativity and linguistic creativity are simply the same thing.

A deep meme is not simply a linguistic unit of meaning that can only be truly understood if restored to its original systematic context within a language of other meanings, but is rather something of a proto-meaning that serves as the very foundation of lesser meanings that circulate within the shallow system of language. For this reason, one would be mistaken to think that the faculty for linguistic creativity is simply loaned out to the service of memes to account for their generation, spread, and evaluation. One does not simply hijack the intellectual resources of one's linguistic faculty to generate memes as linguistic bits of information to be disseminated over networks of linguistic communication. This is because

[19] See John Lyons' *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*

for shallow memes, it is less a matter of creative generation than passive recognition of the influence of a deep meme always already present, always already exerting its geometrical distortion into one's worldview yet never quite exhausted in the vast, sprawling systems whose meaning is transitively borrowed from it anyway.

Given that language is not a satisfactory explanation for the Meme Process, one might be tempted to turn to the field of Aesthetics to account for the dissemination and evaluation of memes. After all, memes, especially the electronic shallow memes so readily shared on social media, might superficially appear to be minor works of art. A catchy image that capitalizes on vivid colours is a minimal requirement to compete in the dense traffic of social network feeds. It is debatable if a glob of text on a plain white background with no image could even qualify as a "meme" in most social media users' definitions. The expectation that shallow memes' should "entertain" their recipient, provoking laughter, pity, or rage, is another unstated rule that directs the success or failure of an incipient meme. It would seem that memes are simply another form of entertainment to which the rules of, say, Hollywood film criticism could be transitively carried over without losing anything, just as a Hollywood blockbuster that lacked catchy images, vivid colours, and raw emotional manipulation would be deemed an utter failure both at the box office and in the critical columns. This is why even filler films with paper-thin character development and subpar plots still fulfil the minimal requirement of casting a vividly recognizable star who can't not catch the eye of the unwitting pedestrian walking past a movie poster on the street (consider, for example, Angelina Jolie's role in stinker films like *Tomb Raider* and *The Tourist*.)

As appealing as the Aesthetic Hypothesis may be to explain memes, there is always something more at work than just an aesthetic evaluation of beauty, even if a shallow meme may incidentally be beautiful *in addition* to being oriented towards a clear purpose beyond mere entertainment. Of course, Kant's *Critique of Judgment* established the mandate that a

piece of art would cease to be art if it acquired a purpose with a teleological orientation towards achieving a goal (172). On one hand, memes do not have an immediately obvious purpose such as, say, a beautiful chair that has a clear purpose as furniture on which to sit. Yet memes have arguably a much more serious purpose than just holding wine or storing fruit. Memes are the machinery by which consciousness obtains an understanding of the world by endowing given contents of consciousness with a value of truth that goes beyond the pseudo-numerical truth value of Modern Logic. Truth is neither a result of a logical formula nor the effect of a correspondence between a fact and a proposition. Truth is simply the fit between a shallow meme and a deep meme that confirms its presuppositions and embodies its worldview.

The teleology of "understanding the world," though absurd on the surface, is something one can never quite escape. In fact, without this underlying structural orientation towards "understanding the world," it is debatable if meaningfulness could be achieved on even the microcosmic level of singular objects or words. Paradoxically, by trying to build up an understanding of the world inductively by establishing one meaning at a time and linearly traversing the entire set of objects in order to build up "the world" as the end result of this impossibly large concatenation of minor meanings, one would miss the point that even the tiniest example of a minor meaning within the world can only be achieved if one has bypassed the set of minor meanings and gone straight to "understanding the world" deductively by establishing a worldview through the structuring twist of the deep meme. Although a deep meme is never an unbiased portrait that faithfully reduplicates "the world" (as though that were even possible), it does play an inescapable structural role that, in a certain sense, allows that world to be given for the subject in the first place. In our era, the deep meme of linear progress is beginning to run into the hard physical limit that the oil and natural gas which are literally its material cause are starting to fall into decline. The eventual

disappearance of these energy sources will result in a collapse of the deep meme of progress and the transformation of all of its sprawling systems of redundancy and all of its transitively true truths into meaningless strings of noise or, even worse, into *falsities* whose truth has suddenly vanished without explanation. This shift from truth to falsity will challenge our deepest notions about how a society should be run by demoting machines, debt, and fossil fuel consumption to dysfunctional relics of the suddenly much more distant past. The abrupt onset of a new deep meme, the bell curve of memory, will bring into existence a whole range of new systems, new myths, new values, and perhaps even new non-electronic shallow memes, spread with the modest technological means of paper and ink in order to incite the same *lols* and the same desire to share the "latest trend" by sending sealed envelopes to friends' mailboxes, hoping that moment of arrival will incite an amusing reaction. At any rate, the transformation of a deep meme will literally change how one "understands the whole world" by, in a very real sense, bringing about a whole new world.

Bibliography

Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Summa Theologica I*. In *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*. Ed. Anton C. Pegis. The Modern Library. New York. 1948.

Aristotle. *De Anima*. Trans. J. A. Smith. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. The Modern Library. New York. 2001.

Aristotle. *The Metaphysics*. Trans. W. D. Ross. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. The Modern Library. New York. 2001.

Aristotle. *On Interpretation*. Trans. E. M. Edghill. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. The Modern Library. New York. 2001.

Aristotle. *The Physics*. Trans. R.P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. The Modern Library. New York. 2001.

Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. Trans. Oliver Feltham. Continuum. London. 2006.

Derrida, Jacques. "Genesis and Structure." In *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 1978.

Greer, John Michael. *Apocalypse Not: Everything You Know About 2012, Nostradamus, and the Rapture is Wrong*. Viva Editions. Berkeley. 2011.

Greer, John Michael. "The Strategy of Salvage." In *The Archdruid Report* Vol. 1. Founders House Publishing. Chicago. 2017.

Habermas, Jurgen. *Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol. 1. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Beacon Press. Boston. 1981.

Hegel, G. W. F. *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford University Press. Oxford. 1977.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. State University of New York Press. Albany. 2010.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Nature of Language." In *On The Way to Language*. Harper-Collins. New York. 1959. Print

Heinberg, Richard. *Afterburn. Society Beyond Fossil Fuels*. New Society Publishers. Gabriola Island. 2015.

Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson. Martino Fine Books. Eastford. 2017

Isaac of Nineveh. *Mystical Treatises of Isaac of Nineveh*. Trans. A. J. Wensinck. Uitgave De Koninklijke Akademie Van Wettenschappen. Amsterdam. 1923

Kaczynski, Theodore. *Industrial Society and Its Future*. In *Technological Slavery*. Ed. David Skrbina. Feral House. Port Townsend. 2010.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner Pluhar. Hackett Publishing Company. Indianapolis. 1987

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Marcus Weigelt. Penguin. London. 2007.

Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity is Near*. Penuin Books. New York. 2006.

Lyons, John. *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1969.

Plato. *The Republic*. In *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton. Princeton University Press. Princeton. 1989.

Zizek, Slavoj. *Absolute Recoil*. Verso. London. 2014.

Made in United States
Orlando, FL
19 June 2022



Although memes are usually thought of as trivial viral images with a short lifespan on social media newsfeeds, Haag argues that memes have a far more important role as underlying structural features of consciousness that provide the transcendental condition of understanding concepts in the first place. In fact, Truth itself simply is the fit between a deep meme, such as the Fossil Fuel Era notion of Progress, and a shallow meme that would lose its truth without the context that fossil fuels provide. Having hit Peak Oil as a globe in 2005, our truths are rapidly losing their memological basis, throwing our very horizon of understanding into crisis. Surviving this transition will require a deeper understanding of the memology of truth.



Chad A. Haag is dedicated to the intersection of Peak Oil and Philosophy, hosting a YouTube channel called The New Chadafrican Philosophy and Peak Oil and writing several books on the topic. Having left academia, Chad now lives in the village of Uchakkada, India with his wife Minu.

ISBN 9781790361359